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PENSIONS AND PATRIOTISM.

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OF PENSIONS.

THE attention of the country has been particularly attracted to the subject of pensions by the passage by Congress last year of the law known as the "Disability Bill" and the expenditure of \$106,000,000 for pensions. The fact that more than 600,000 claims have been filed under this recent law, and the further fact that the expenditures for pensions will be materially increased, have provoked a discussion upon the general subject of pensions not at all complimentary to the legislators who passed the laws or to the old soldiers who become the beneficiaries.

It is alleged that already unjust and unnecessary taxation is maintained to meet these expenditures, which are likely to be swelled to an annual outlay of \$200,000,000. The wisdom and justice of the whole system of pension legislation seem to be seriously called into question.

All civilized nations have for centuries granted pensions in some form to the soldiers who fought in their great wars. The United States has followed the example of other nations, and has granted pensions, and passed other beneficial laws, for the soldiers who have fought in all the wars from 1775 to the present time, and the widows, orphans, and dependent parents of deceased soldiers have been made beneficiaries of this legislation. Pensions were first granted for wounds and other disabilities incurred in the service and in line of duty. But little opposition has ever been manifested to the passage of laws granting pensions to this class of persons. The next step has been, after the lapse of years, to grant a service pension to the survivors of a war. This was done for the survivors of the Revolutionary War, of the War of 1812, and of the Mexican War. The law of 1887 granting a service pension to the surviving veterans of the

Mexican War received the approval of the country, as an act of justice to a class of patriotic citizens who had performed honorable service and who were then in the decline of life.

Prior to the War for the Union a favorite plan for the recognition of the value of the services of our citizen soldiery was to make them grants from the public lands. To the soldiers of the War of 1812 and of the Mexican War were granted land warrants amounting to 63,500,000 acres, being 2,000,000 greater than the area of Illinois and Ohio.

This long line of legislative precedents has a profound meaning. It emphasizes the fact that the noblest duty a man can perform is to risk his life for his country; that a soldier who incurs the hardships and dangers of war does so not only to protect his own doorsill but that of all the citizens of the republic; that the paltry dollars which a soldier receives as monthly pay for his military service in time of war cannot be considered a suitable equivalent for his patriotic services; and that an equitable obligation arises on the part of the government to make suitable provision for the men who have fought under the national flag, and for their widows, orphans, and dependent parents.

It is said that this obligation does not rest in contract. Be it so. It is, however, an obligation which rests upon principles and sentiments quite as binding upon the heart and conscience of the nation as a written contract signed and sealed.

When a nation goes to war, its very existence is involved. The outcome of the struggle depends upon the number of soldiers that can be rallied under the flag, and therefore upon the patriotism of the people. It is essential to the safety of every country that this spirit of patriotism shall be encouraged and fostered so as to maintain a willingness on the part of the people to spring to the defence of the country in time of danger. This spirit is regarded with us as a greater bulwark for public defence than a large standing army. In all countries the highest honor is accorded to the men who fight the battles of their country.

There seem to be three well-defined grounds upon which pension laws and other beneficial legislation for soldiers rest: first, to stimulate the spirit of patriotism in the people by recognizing and honoring the love of country exhibited by the soldiers; second, a recognition that the monthly pay of the soldier was not a suitable equivalent for the services rendered; third, a broad sen-

timent of gratitude upon the part of the people to men who have died in defence of their country and to those who have risked health and life under the flag.

Let no one make the mistake of concluding that all this legislation by Congress and by State legislatures for the benefit of the men who served their country during the war, and of their widows and orphans, is prompted simply by a spirit of almsgiving. It was not this spirit which inspired the erection of the numerous soldiers' homes throughout the country, where thousands of disabled veterans receive care and treatment, and the establishment of national cemeteries for the repose of heroic dust; nor was this the moving cause for the enactment of the various pension laws now upon the statute-book. These acts were prompted by patriotism, justice, and gratitude—to bestow benefactions on the living, benedictions on the dead.

Earnest objection has been made in some quarters to the act of June 27, 1890, known as the Disability Pension Law. This act is a broad departure from the principle of other laws granting pensions for disabilities. All the other laws restrict pensions to persons who incurred wounds and disabilities in the service and in line of duty, and to the widows and orphans or dependent parents of such persons. The incurrence of the disability in the service was the central fact in a claim, and the burden of proving this fact devolved upon the claimant.

The administration of the pension laws for twenty-five years developed the fact that hundreds of thousands of old soldiers who had served faithfully were now, and had been for years, seriously disabled, but could not furnish the proof to show that their disabilities were of service origin. That they had followed the flag for four years and had never missed a battle, and were now seriously disabled, was not enough to warrant the granting of a pension. They were required to show that they had suffered from some injury or disease in the service to which the present disability could rightfully be attributed.

Observation and experience had demonstrated that military service, with its exposures, fatigues, and excitements, was a potent cause in destroying health and breaking down constitutions. When the services rendered in the great campaigns of the late war are recalled, it is not to be wondered at that the health and strength of the men were broken down.

Let us glance for a moment at the career of the Army of the Tennessee, composed of the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Corps, as an illustration. The regiments of this army were mostly organized in 1861 and 1862. Some of them were in all the great battles of the western army. They were in Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia. They were at Belmont, Fort Henry, Donelson, Shiloh, the siege of Corinth, Iuka, the battle of Corinth, and Hatchee. They penetrated central Mississippi in the winter of 1862. They went down the Yazoo Pass in the spring of 1863. They crossed the Mississippi River below Vicksburg on May 1, 1863, and in twenty-two days had fought five battles, had laid siege to Vicksburg, and had assaulted the works. Failing in their attempt to capture the works by assault, they besieged the place until it surrendered on July 4, 1863. They immediately marched upon Jackson and dispersed General Johnston's army. They went by steamboat to Memphis, thence marched 300 miles to the relief of Chattanooga, and fought at Missionary Ridge. They immediately marched to the relief of Knoxville. They captured Meridian and destroyed its railroads. They were in the campaign against Atlanta; were one hundred days under fire and fought in its battles. They alone fought and defeated Hood's army July 22, when McPherson fell. They held Allatoona Pass and Resaca against Hood. They were on the great March to the Sea, fought at Griswoldville, and captured Fort McAllister. They entered Savannah about Christmas and rested three weeks. On January 16, 1865, they started on their last campaign through the Carolinas. It was winter. The first day they encountered a tremendous storm, which caused the greatest flood in the Savannah River in fifty years. Their camps were necessarily pitched in mud and water. The roads were almost impassable. They swam or bridged swollen streams; they overcame every impediment; they fought battles and drove the enemy before them, and finally witnessed the surrender of the rebel army under General Johnston.

They had first met this able general at Jackson, Miss., then in Georgia, and now, for the last time, in North Carolina. These men marched through Virginia and were in the great review at Washington. They fought under Grant, Sherman, McPherson, Logan, Howard, Dodge, Blair, and a host of able division and

brigade commanders. Thousands of these men never crossed the threshold of a hospital, and yet but few of them who carried muskets are now able to undergo the fatigues of manual labor. It is not to be believed by intelligent men and women that the soldiers who endured these hardships and dangers came out of the service with unimpaired vitality.

The services of this army are a specimen of the services of all the armies. These mighty services were performed under the influence of a patriotic elation which wrought up the will and made nerves of steel; but when their labors were ended a reaction came, and with it that multitude of incurable ailments which have baffled the skill of the most learned physicians of the land.

Nearly all the great leaders in the war have died before their time, and the rank and file of the army are dropping off more rapidly than their neighbors of the same age. More than two out of seven of the survivors of the war have already died. A careful examination of the vital statistics of survivors of the late war has led to the conclusion that probably 600,000 of them were so impaired in health that they have lost at least twelve years of the usual expectation of life. The fact that hundreds of thousands of the survivors are poor, and unable to perform manual labor because of physical disabilities, is so well attested that it will not admit of dispute. The ranks of the army were filled by men who before their enlistment and after their discharge earned their living by labor. Good health was a prime factor with them in their struggle for subsistence. When that failed them, their capital was gone. They found that where the physical condition of a man is such that he cannot perform a full day's labor it is difficult for him to obtain employment. The procession of able-bodied men passed on and secured the best places, while these dropped behind and were compelled to accept such employment as they could get. This was the experience of thousands of old soldiers who in the days of their strength performed heroic service for the country.

All the facts in the case were duly considered by the last Congress, and it came to the relief of this deserving class of men and enacted the law of June 27, 1890, known as the Disability Pension Act. This law grants a pension of not less than \$6 nor more than \$12 per month to all honorably-discharged soldiers who served ninety days or more, and who are suffering from a

mental or physical disability of a permanent character, not the result of their own vicious habits, which incapacitates them for the performance of manual labor in such degree as to render them unable to earn a support. It also grants a pension of \$8 per month to the widows of deceased soldiers who are without other means of support than their daily labor, and \$2 each per month to the children of soldiers under sixteen years of age. Pensions granted under this act begin with the date of filing the applications.

The execution of this law will no doubt dispose of a great mass of claims, filed under former laws, which have been pending for years. The allowance of claims under the rates fixed by this law has already reduced the average first payments on pension certificates from \$485, the average of last year, to about \$120, and the average monthly allowance to claimants now is less than \$9.

The total payments for pensions this year will be about \$116,-000,000, being about \$9,000,000 less than was estimated and appropriated for by Congress. The appropriation for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1891, is \$127,670,793.89. This amount is believed to be sufficient for the next fiscal year. Taking into account the number of pensioners who will be dropped from the rolls by death and other causes, it is believed that 250,000 new pensions can be granted next year without creating a deficiency in the appropriation. It is also believed that the maximum number of names will be placed on the pension rolls during the fiscal year 1893 ; that the maximum annual expenditure for pensions will be made during that year, and that the amount will not reach \$150,-000,000. From that time forward there will be a reduction in the expenditure for pensions.

No fears need be entertained that it will be necessary to levy new taxes for the payment of pensions. All war taxes have been removed save those now levied through the internal-revenue office. Last year these taxes provided ample funds to pay the pensions and the interest on the national debt. These war taxes will suffice at all times to meet the necessary appropriations for existing pension legislation.

The men who fought to save the Union were not mercenaries. They did not preserve this country for the purpose of looting its treasury. They are to-day as earnestly devoted to the interests and prosperity of the country as they were from 1861 to 1865.

They have no desire to see burdensome pension legislation which will require the levying of unjust and unnecessary taxation, and, above all, they do not propose by any action on their part to withdraw from the sympathetic touch of that body of their fellow-citizens who witnessed the great struggle for the Union, or of that generation of people who have come upon the stage of action since the war. They know that their services during the war merited the respect of their fellow-citizens, and by no act of theirs will they forfeit that respect while life lasts.

Thousands of these men ask for no pensions for themselves, but they do ask that their deserving comrades who are disabled shall have from the country a generous recognition of their services. They feel that an old soldier can receive a pension as a recognition of honorable service with a feeling of pride, while he would turn his back with shame upon an offer of charity.

One hundred years have elapsed since the Revolution, and we see a patriotic awakening among the descendants of the soldiers of that period in the organization of societies of Sons and Daughters of the Revolution. The respect of the American people for the men of '76 has not died out, and the descendants of those heroes trace with reverence and pride the record of the services of their ancestors in the pension office. Will the descendants of the heroes of the War for the Union one hundred years hence fail to exhibit an equal pride in the history of the services of their grandfathers? Methinks, as the time approaches for the celebration of the centennial of Appomattox, millions of people will proudly trace their lineage from those who served in that great war, and will venerate their ancestors' names all the more because they were pensioned for their honorable services.

The Bureau of Pensions is no doubt the largest executive bureau in the world. The office force consists of 2,009 persons, besides eighteen pension agents, with a clerical force of 419, and 3,795 examining surgeons stationed in various parts of the country; being a total force of 6,241. The force of the bureau is organized into fifteen divisions. Five of these divisions, with 1,391 clerks, adjudicate all claims, which are in turn reviewed by the board of review, with a force of 166 persons. These divisions pass upon the sufficiency of the evidence for the establishment of claims, while the medical division, with a force of 160 persons, decides all medical questions reported by boards of

medical examiners, and fixes the degree of disability upon which the rate of pension is based. All claims are carefully briefed, and the action of the several divisions is noted upon the face of the brief.

No original claim is allowed without the action of the examiner in the adjudicating division and of a reviewer and re-reviewer in the board of review ; and the action of these persons is under the constant supervision of the chiefs and assistant chiefs of their divisions. The adjudicating divisions are under the immediate direction of the two deputy commissioners, and the board of review and the medical division are under the immediate direction of the Commissioner, while the entire business of the bureau is, in turn, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, assisted by one of his assistant secretaries, with a board of appeals in the department for the reëxamination of cases appealed from the decision of the Commissioner. The whole business of the office is conducted according to well-established rules.

At this writing (June 13) there are 119,815 cases which have been drawn from the files and are in the hands of the various divisions undergoing necessary action for their adjudication and allowance, while there are 28,023 cases which have been allowed and are in process of having certificates written and forwarded for payment. This great movement of cases is kept up, so that at this time there are 30,000 cases per month allowed. Calls for evidence are made in 85,000 cases per month, and orders for medical examinations in 45,000 cases. When cases are completed and notice is given, they are immediately withdrawn from the files for adjudication. The average monthly mail of the office is 600,000 pieces, each of which is duly acknowledged.

There are now pending 168,975 soldiers' and 93,949 widows' original claims under the old laws ; 135,611 of these soldiers and 73,982 of these widows have filed claims under the Disability Bill in connection with the above claims. There are 300,810 claims for increase of pensions pending ; 179,214 soldiers' and 59,960 widows' original claims pending under the Disability Bill ; also 77,180 claims in cases where pensions have been granted under other laws ; and there are 5,418 claims based on military service prior to 1861. The total number of claims pending is 1,095,099. The actual number of original claimants who have not been pensioned is : soldiers, 348,189 ; widows, 153,909 ; old war, 5,418 ; total,

507,516. All other claims are for increase of pensions already granted or duplicate claims under other laws.

It is estimated that 1,208,707 soldiers of the Union are now living, and that 1,004,658 soldiers were killed in battle and died during and since the war. Of these survivors 478,356 are now on the pension rolls, and 120,522 widows and dependents are on the rolls. So it appears that 730,451 survivors are not pensioned, and 884,136 deceased soldiers are not now represented on the pension rolls.

At the close of the war, when the country was staggering under a great weight of debt and taxation, the men who controlled the legislation of the country did not decline to provide for the payment of the public debt because it was large. Such action would have been both cowardly and dishonest. On the contrary, they faced the great problem with courage and solved it with wisdom and honor. They amended the constitution of the United States, and in amendment XIV., section 4, it is declared that "the validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned."

Here is a solemn constitutional recognition of the right of these soldiers to pensions, and of the duty of Congress to enact suitable laws granting the same. This amendment recognizes and protects two great classes of financial obligations. The one is to those who held the securities of the government issued to raise money to carry on the war; the other is to those who took the personal risks of war and whose patriotism and valor saved the Union. The heroism of the men in arms made the great cause triumphant, and by their success converted the depreciated obligations held by public creditors into glittering gold; and now when this mighty obligation of the old soldiers has matured, because of their infirmities and their weight of years, shall it be denied them because the sum is large?

In 1865 the interest charge upon the public debt was nearly \$151,500,000, and the pensions were \$8,500,000; an aggregate of \$160,000,000. The public creditor expected his interest, and it was paid by the people without abatement. The population was then 35,000,000, and this annual charge of interest and pensions was \$4.57 per capita. The public debt is now almost paid. It is

no longer a burden. The bondholders have received \$2,600,179,000 in interest and premiums since July 1, 1861. The pensioners have received \$1,284,716,000. The present interest charge for 1891 is \$36,408,000, and the pensions for this year will cost \$116,000,000, or an annual aggregate of interest and pensions of \$152,408,000. We now have a population of 63,000,000 ; so that this annual expense of interest and pensions is \$2.44 per capita.

The gratitude of this nation to its defenders should be measured by the value of the service rendered and the financial ability of this people to respond to the demands of just pension legislation.

When the War of the Rebellion closed, the public debt amounted to about one-tenth of the wealth of the country. Now it amounts to about one-fiftieth. Then the public debt was \$63.50 per capita. Now it is \$9.75 per capita. A new nation of 30,000,000 has been added to the population. The States now span the continent, and are traversed from ocean to ocean by great lines of railroad. There were none when the war closed. This country is now the grandest on earth. It is great in its territory and in its natural productions ; great in a mighty, free, homogeneous, law-abiding people ; great in its system of free government and the loyalty of its people to their institutions ; great in its progress, its productions, and its accumulated wealth, and great in the friendship of other peoples, and in their confidence and respect.

The generation of people who have come upon the stage of action since the war closed should understand that the blessings of peace and prosperity now enjoyed by the people of the United States are due to the patriotism and valor of the soldiers of the Union. These men met and overcame the greatest rebellion the world ever saw. The stake for which they contended was the greatest ever submitted to the arbitration of arms. They maintained the political unity of a country which God had made for one people. They solved the mooted question of man's capacity for self-government. They broke all the fetters of slavery. These men will pass away as a tale that is told, but their work will endure forever.

GREEN B. RAUM.